

Rep. Ken Calvert introduced a bill Thursday to allow drilling off the coast of California. Rep. Dana Rohrabacher this week put in a measure to exempt solar projects from environmental rules.

Both Orange County lawmakers aren't expected to be able to get these bills through this year because of Democratic opposition. But both said such measures are needed to begin addressing the current pain at the pump.

House Speaker Nancy Pelosi said that offshore drilling is "off the table." And Democrats have been consistently unwilling to bend the kind of environmental rules Rohrabacher, R-Huntington Beach, wants to circumvent.

Pelosi made those comments as Republicans blocked a move by the Democrats to pass a bill that would have pushed drilling on federal lands already leased by oil companies.

Rohrabacher, Calvert and Reps. Ed Royce, R-Fullerton and **John Campbell**, Irvine, voted against the Democratic bill – called the Drill Act. Reps. Gary Miller, R-Diamond Bar and Loretta Sanchez, D-Garden Grove, had family emergencies and were not on Capitol Hill for the vote.

Although the Democrats' bill received a majority of votes, it didn't meet the two-thirds majority it needed because the bill was brought up outside of the regular procedures.

"All of us are frustrated," said Calvert. "I go home and people are absolutely beside themselves about what they're having to pay. They're looking for us to do something, not this charade that the democratic majority put on today."

Calvert said it's clear that there is oil to be had offshore and said "we can drill off the coast of California beyond the sight line" and provide enough revenues to the state to deal with its deficit.

Under Calvert's measure – called the MORE Act, Maximize Offshore Resource Exploration – would revoke the congressional moratorium on offshore drilling, the only thing standing in way of such efforts now that President Bush this week reversed an executive order banning such drilling. Rohrabacher is one of 13 original co-sponsors of Calvert's bill. No Democrats have signed on to it.

The bill also says that states would get 75 percent of the royalties the offshore drilling leases would provide. Drilling would only be allowed starting 25 miles from the shoreline. The first 25 miles belongs to the states.

If, the bill also says, states agree to drilling within 25 miles of their coastline, they share of the

royalties would increase to 90 percent.

Calvert dismissed the Democrat's argument that there is already 68 million acres of federal lands leased to the oil companies that are not being used.

"The Democrats want to drill where there's no oil," Calvert said. But Pelosi said at a news conference Thursday that oil companies have told her they're not using those lands because either "it takes as long time" or "they don't have the equipment."

Rohrabacher said he is introducing a bill to waive environment impact statement requirements for solar projects in an effort to jump-start that technology.

"My bill simply says that in this time of crisis we should exempt solar energy projects from the need for the very complicated and drawn out EIR reports," Rohrabacher said.

"Are we going to do it?" Rohrabacher said." It depends on if the public – when they start filling up their cars with gas and seeing it's \$80 or \$90 – whether they scream and yell and demand that their government quit representing radical environmentalists."